

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**  
**Wisconsin's Northern State Forest Assessments:**  
**Sustainable Forestry**

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## **Executive Summary**

The state forest statute was revised in 1996 to explicitly articulate sustainable forestry as the guiding principle for management of Wisconsin's designated state forests. This document outlines a set of indicators that address five criteria germane to the principles of sustainable forestry as applied to the state forests. The criteria are maintenance of biological resources; maintenance of soil and water resources; provision of multiple economic benefits; maintenance of social and cultural values; and framework for practicing sustainable forestry.

The indicators are designed to facilitate a critical review of proposed plan alternatives and, subsequently, plan implementation. The indicators do not foster a simplistic evaluation of sustainability. Rather, the indicators will facilitate the gathering and evaluation of data that collectively can be used to assess sustainability.

A team of Department staff developed and refined a set of indicators that drew on several sources as a foundation, including work by the USDA Forest Service, Canadian Standards Association, American Forest & Paper Association, Forest Stewardship Council and Great Lakes Forestry Alliance. The draft report was initially sent out for external review by a wide array of individuals and groups in 1997. A revised set of criteria and indicators were developed in response to the comments we received, as well as the regional criteria and indicators that were developed by the Great Lakes Forestry Alliance in 1998. A second external review was conducted in 1999, following which the report was finalized.

Hundreds of potential indicators were evaluated during the development of this report. The criteria used for selecting indicators were: relevance to sustainability; applicability at a state forest or appropriate regional scale; and responsiveness to change. Issues of measurability and practicality were also considered in evaluating the potential indicators, however, they were not used as the sole basis for excluding an indicator.

The Department anticipates the need to reassess the indicators following their application in one or two forest planning processes. It is our expectation that changes will be needed to better reflect key issues, data limitations, and resource constraints. The Department is committed to practicing sustainable forestry on the state forests and will, using best available information and working with the public, use the indicators to assist in the design and implementation of state forest management and use.